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AUTHOR Sherritt, Caroline
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ABSTRACT

Although the National Open University of Taiwan (NOU) and Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) both opened in the 1980s in environments of rapid economic growth and political stability, the NOU reflects traditional Chinese values whereas the OUHK merges Chinese and Western beliefs. Categorized as a "supplemental" school, the NOU occupies a somewhat marginal position in Taiwan's educational system. Although it boasts a computer center and distance learning, the NOU lacks the more advanced distance education technology available at Taiwan's traditional universities. Unlike their counterparts at Taiwan's traditional universities, NOU graduates do not generally change careers after graduation. Of the NOU's student body, 25% are public officials, 25% are businesspersons, and women outnumber men 60% to 40%. At the OUHK, on the other hand, the main priority is advancing individual and national economic goals, and contributions from the private sector and collaboration with business and industry for onsite training are emphasized. Of the OUHK's graduates in 1998, 58% were managerial or professional workers and 60% were men. The most popular areas of study at the OUHK are computing, business administration, and primary education. Using the latest information technology to deliver instruction is a priority at the OUHK. (Contains 29 endnotes.) (MN)

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Results of a Study of Hong Kong and Taiwan Open Universities

Caroline Sherritt, Ph. D.
Faculty of Adult Education and Technology
University of Wyoming
Laramie, WY 82071
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Hong Kong and Taiwan: Two Case Studies in Asian Open and Distance Learning

Formal adult education in the West began in earnest during the industrial revolution to cultivate a trained labor force and literate, cohesive population. It grew rapidly during the 1920s when scholars such as Eduard Lindeman and John Dewey proposed a democratic, learner- centered philosophy of education known as Progressivism,[1] and it gained momentum in the civil rights era of the 1960s. During the 1960s, Sizer created a model for education linking stages of national development to types of education.[2] He did not anticipate the changes that technology would inspire in the coming decades but his premise remains strong: education is contextual and, as societies change, so do their educational needs. Asia experienced unprecedented change in the postwar era that precipitated new educational initiatives.

Open and Distance Learning Universities in Asia

One by one, Asian nations are adopting a lifelong learning orientation and open universities for adult learners are proliferating. Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Turkey, and India have between 200,000 and 500,000 students in their open and distance learning universities; China has nearly one million.[3] There are open universities in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Viet Nam. Tam noted that open and distance learning are becoming "the main vehicles for addressing the education, training, and human resource development needs of Asian nations."[4]

The model for open learning, best exemplified by the British Open University, is grounded in adult education theory with a distinctly Western orientation, including: 1) nurturing autonomous, self-directed individuals to reach their potential, 2) challenging the status quo so that adult learners become change agents in society, 3) linking education with job training, hence labor force requirements, 4) redressing social inequities, and 5) promoting a democratic society.[5] The International Council for Adult Education has in its mission the desire to promote:

1. peace;
2. the advancement of women, oppressed, and marginalized people;
3. universal literacy and access to education, basic service, and employment. [6]

Adult education in the West is an amalgam of democratic, humanist, and capitalist ideals not widely embraced in Asia. Coping with this inconsistency while providing viable adult education is a challenge for two emerging institutions: the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) and the National Open University of Taiwan (NOU).

Two Case Studies: Hong Kong and Taiwan

Taiwan and Hong Kong have enjoyed extraordinary economic growth and political stability in the postwar era. [7] Rapid economic growth brings concomitant needs for adult education and training to sustain emerging infrastructures and maintain global competitiveness. The National Open University of Taiwan (NOU) and the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) evolve in the shadow of this

mandate. The former, though by nature a non-traditional institution, nonetheless reflects traditional Chinese values. The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) merges both Chinese and western beliefs. These institutions have much in common:

- Opened in the 1980s;
- Reside in places moving rapidly from manufacturing to technology based industries;
- Use distance technology as the primary mode of course delivery;
- Serve approximately twenty to thirty thousand students annually;
- Offer open admission;
- Confer university degrees;
- Have high graduation rates and enjoy public support;
- Share a common Chinese cultural heritage.[8]

The Traditional Chinese View of Education. Chinese culture is characterized by a hierarchy of social classes, a meritocracy at least as old as the Tang Dynasty, subordination of human rights to a sense of social obligation, and respect for scholarship. [9] Chinese education developed in a traditional Confucian way: rigorous examinations, creation of elite higher education institutions, and teacher-centered learning. In fact, Fei noted that Chinese education serves to preserve rather than challenge traditional values.[10] Huang described Chinese traditional education as more suited for young students than for adults or people with disabilities. She wrote: "Older learners are not attracted to and do not learn effectively in this type of (traditional) environment."[11] Common in Confucian

based culture is the belief that a paternalistic government will take care of deserving, virtuous citizens but that the citizens have no right to make demands on the political father.[12] This perspective is illustrated at the National Open University of Taiwan.

Chinese Values Reflected in the National Open University of Taiwan. The "educational ideals" of the National Open University (NOU) of Taipei reflect traditional values.

> It is hoped that students will join in honoring long upheld virtues and values in traditional Chinese culture. It is important to teach them the concepts of teamwork and showing respect toward their work. This in turn will contribute to Taiwan's stability and prosperity. [13]

Huang cited "broad workforce development" as a goal for NOU but evidence suggests this mission is not internalized in the vision for and operation of the National Open University.

NOU is the purview of the department of Supplementary Education under the aegis of the Taiwan Ministry of Education. In a fifty-nine page booklet describing education in Taiwan, published in 1997 by the National Bureau of Statistics, the National Open University is mentioned briefly only twice. [14] The category of schools into which NOU falls (supplemental) implies a somewhat marginal position in the whole system. The benevolent government is looking out for virtuous citizens by providing education to enhance their quality of life. [15] An alternative to this approach would be a robust open university integrated into national goals and structures. In this conception, NOU would be a university like

all others,except for its unusual clientele, and receive the same attention and resources. Under this umbrella, NOU would also strategically contribute to national goals.

Instructional Technology at NOU. Further evidence that NOU is not integral to mainstream education is in the quality of technological resources. The National Open University boasts a computer center and distance learning. However, the more advanced use of technology for distance education is restricted to traditional universities in Taiwan. A government mandated experiment in Web based curriculum and two-way video instruction is being piloted at traditional universities. Hence, a university in one city may provide online or video courses for a university in another city, often in proximity, and there are graduate institutes in Taiwan where all students are provided with a personal computer for their studies. [16]

By comparison, NOU uses one-way broadcast media for its programs, including radio, television, and videotaped lectures. These media are characterized as third generation instruction technology and, being non-interactive, less effective than other electronic media. [17] Correspondence, or print media, is fourth generation; interactive video is second generation; computer technology is first generation. In Taiwan, state-of-the-art distance education technology is restricted to the more prestigious, resource rich traditional universities.

Student Body Profile as a Reflection of Educational Priorities. Forty years of research in the West on adult student motivation reveals a strong correlation

between formal learning and vocational interests. Adult students tend most often to go back to school to get a job, keep a job, get a better job, or change jobs altogether. Interestingly, these goals are not pervasive among Taiwanese learners at NOU. A 1997 study found that NOU graduates did not change careers after graduation. [18] They reported greatest satisfaction from enhanced self-respect and respect from others, as well as the personally edifying opportunity to acquire something (an education) that they missed in their youth. Huang noted that one third of NOU graduates return for additional schooling although graduate degrees are not offered. [19]

In 1994, the student body profile at the National Open University of Taiwan represented 25 percent public officials with an equal number of businessmen; women outnumbered men, 60 to 40 percent.[20] Humanities and social science majors were slightly more pervasive than business majors. [21] This contrasts markedly with the student body at Hong Kong Open University, discussed below.

Human Resource Development at the Open University of Hong Kong. In the late 1980s Hong Kong leaders wrestled with some vexing problems.

> The shift from a manufacturing-based economy to one with increasingly sophisticated technical and service sectors highlighted a growing vacuum of workers with professional skills. Making matters worse were signs of a potentially serious brain drain- a topic which made newspaper headlines with great regularity. Something needed to be done if Hong Kong was to maintain its competitive edge and continue to flourish. [22]

OUHK was a response to these problems because "never before had the need for wider access to learning and professional retraining been as demanding." [23] Various ambitious goals were postulated for the Open University of Hong Kong, including:

- Broaden the horizons of learners both personally and professionally;
- Establish a "learning community";
- Facilitate the "free exchange of ideas";
- Create a "user-friendly" "learner-oriented" environment;
- Attract sponsorship and build links with the commercial and industrial sectors;
- Link with tertiary institutions around the world and region.

[24]

Advancing Economic Goals Through Links with the Public Sector. Advancing individual and national economic goals is a priority for the Open University of Hong Kong. Contributions from the private sector and collaboration with business and industry for on-site training are two indicators of this focus. For example, donations to OUHK have come from the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club, Lee Hysan Foundation, Wei Lun Foundation, Hong Kong Telecom, Rotarian Lodge, Zonta Club, and other foundations and societies.[25] In addition, OUHK works with local businesses to establish training. A notable example is Cathay Pacific Airline.[26]

Student Body Profile as a Reflection of Educational Priorities. Other indicators of the Open University's commitment to job training are found in the student body profile. Fifty-eight percent OUHK graduates in 1998 were classified as

managerial or professional workers; 60 percent were men. The most popular areas of study are computing, business administration, and primary education.[27] OUHK offers graduate degrees in business administration and education. Interestingly, humanities study, though not as strong as business related fields or as popular as it is in Taiwan, generates significant interest among OUHK students.

Instructional Technology at OUHK. In 1997, Tung Chee-Hwa, chief executive of Hong Kong, delivered a speech outlining his vision for the future of Chinese Hong Kong. Among his priorities was the use of information technology for education. [28] Instructional technology at the Open University of Hong Kong includes broadcast media as well as computer based delivery. OUHK develops and uses some Chinese language materials, such as classes in Chinese on CD ROMs. Heretofore, many Asian open universities, including OUHK, purchased curriculum materials in English. Obviously, there is a huge market in Hong Kong, on the mainland, and elsewhere for Chinese materials, positioning OUHK in the vanguard of an important trend. In addition, OUHK has a 500,000 volume on-line library. [29]

Conclusion

When Sizer linked educational systems to stages of national development in the 1960s, he did not anticipate the information age. Economically and politically viable nations in the 1990s and beyond need trained and literate people (human resources). Adult education is most effective when tied to national goals (human resource development). Despite the economic cloud over Asia today, the region

enjoyed rapid economic growth after World War II with a concomitant need for education across the life span. Open and distance learning universities, favored adult education vehicles in much of the world, have proliferated in Asia in the last two decades.

The National Open University in Taiwan (NOU) and the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) provide interesting case studies in the evolution of Asian adult education. These institutions have much in common including a shared Chinese cultural heritage. However, close examination reveals that each has developed its own unique style.

NOU's evolution reflects Chinese values. This is evidenced by I) a mission that emphasizes Confucian ideals, II) a marginal relationship to more cherished traditional education and III) relatively limited use of advanced instructional technology. Data indicate that NOU graduates enjoy enhanced quality of life but seldom use their educational attainment for vocational advantage. In other words, although NOU graduates must on occasion use their degrees for better or different jobs, most do not. It is difficult to determine whether perceptions of Taiwan NOU graduates about the effects of their education reflect the curriculum and mission of the institution or whether the university adapts its curriculum and mission to perceived needs of adult learners. However, years of adult learning research points to vocational goals as the primary motivator for adult students elsewhere in the world.

The National Open University of Taiwan has served over one hundred thousand citizens who might otherwise not have enjoyed higher learning. It has a

dedicated and competent staff justifiably proud of their accomplishments. On the other hand, by not clearly linking adult learning to national goals or integrating it into a seamless system of education, Taiwan society is potentially missing an important benefit of open and distance learning: development of human resource capital.

OUHK is substantially different from its counterpart in Taipei. The differences are illuminated in OUHK's mission, which seeks "learner centered" and "user friendly" objectives, different from the Confucian, collective ideals reflected at the National Open University of Taipei. Further, OUHK aggressively links with the private sector, business and industry, and other education institutions around the world, exhibiting the pragmatic, economic orientation of Hong Kong itself. Not surprisingly, business administration is the most popular area of study for OUHK students but comes in third among students at Taiwan's Open University. The important economic priorities at OUHK support investment in state-of-the-art technology. The university uses advanced instructional technology, has an impressive online library, and offers a degree in computing.

These two vibrant, new universities are works in progress. It may be that the Open University of Hong Kong will become more Confucian in curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, policies, and priorities. Indeed, OUHK is developing Chinese language materials and expanding into the mainland. The National Open University of Taiwan may realize that adult education produces more than happy, "virtuous" citizens; that it can cultivate human resource capital

for national development and, in its way, is as valuable to national health as traditional university education.

NOTES

1 Eduard Lindeman, *The Meaning of Adult Education* (New York, Republic, 1926).

[2] Sizer

[3] Open University of Hong Kong, *Openlink*, vol. 8, issue 1 (Hong Kong, January 1999)

[4] ibid p 3

[5] For more information on adult education see Malcom Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Educati*[5] For more information about the Progressive movement and adult education, see *on* (New York: Cambridge, 1980) or any publication by Knowles. Also see Sharan Merriam and Rosemary Caffarella, *Learning in Adulthood* (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 1991). To explore the critical, liberation education theory, begin with Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1973), (New York: Continuum Publishing).

[6] Peter Cookson, "International and Comparative Adult Education," in Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1989). 70-97

[7] John C. H. Fei, "Prosperity and Stability in Hong Kong: A Cultural Approach," and Cal Clark, "Economic and Political Development in Taiwan: A Reciprocal Relationship," in *Political Stability and Economic Growth: Case Studies of Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore*, ed. Winberg Chai and Cal Clark (Chicago: Third World Institute for Policy Research, 1991)

[8] Much of this information is from a Fulbright sponsored study to Taiwan and Hong Kong in 1997, during which I visited both institutions. In addition to interviewing staff and faculty at the open universities, I talked with Directors of Adult Education Graduate Institutes in Taiwan universities who are instrumental in setting policy for open learning.

[9] See John C. H. Fei, 55.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Judy Huang, "Distance Education: A Key Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Chinese Taipei," Opinion paper in *Lifelong Learning: Policies, Practices, and Programs* (1997), 244-253.

[12] Fei, page 5.

[13] National Open University of Taiwan, *Introduction to the National Open University*, (Taipei, 1994).

[14]

Ministry of Education, *Education in the Republic of China* (Taipei, June 1997).

[15] Fei, page 5.

[16] More information gleaned on the 1997 study trip.

[17] A good overview of interactive versus non-interactive instructional technology is found in D. Randy Garrison, "Distance Education, " in *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1989). 222-243

[18] These figures were provided by Li, I. C. from the Department of Research and Development at the National Open University (Taipei, 1997).

[19] Huang

[20] Huang, 249

[21] Information from Li at National Open University, 1997.

[22] Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong, *Opening Doors to Learning: The First Five Years of the OLI* (Hong Kong, 1994).

[23] Ibid. 10

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid

[26] Open University of Hong Kong, *Openlink*, vol. 2, issue 1 (Hong Kong, April 1998).

[27] Ibid. 14

[28] Ahmed Shafiqul Huque, "New Rhetoric, Old Directions: Public Policy in the Hong Kong SAR," *Asian Affairs Journal* vol. 25, 3 (Fall 1998) 151-165.

[29] Information acquired during the 1997 study of OUHK and conversations with administrators.